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ABSTRACT

Administration is the process of working with and through others to efficiently accomplish organizational goals by planning, organizing, leading, and controlling. The basic skills required by an effective administrator are technical, human, and conceptual. A strong school administrator preparation and certification program resembles the classical liberal educational model rather than a vocational school education model. Administrator preparation programs heavily oriented toward teaching the theory of administration along with a historical perspective will better equip and develop analytical and evaluating skills for the school administrator. Stipulations for the liberal education model are that: (1) preparation programs be university rather than field based; (2) internship experiences should be the culminating field-based experience; (3) state regulated courses and requirements should be kept to a minimum and be specified in only a general way; (4) state regulation should speak to qualitative and substantive standards and avoid programmatic details; and (5) programs developed by universities should be judged on intellectual integrity, ethics, and the ideals of educational leadership. (MLF)

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A PROPOSAL FOR IMPROVING ADMINISTRATIVE PREPARATION AND CERTIFICATION PROGRAMS

by

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As a general rule, the more abstract, theoretical and foundational the program for preparing school administrators the more lasting the effect. This perspective applies as well not only to educating professional administrators but other professionals as well. I believe the best preparation programs for administrators across the United States usually teach the least about practical aspects of administration. They teach a good deal of practical information pertaining to administration, but in addition, they teach the theory of administration and offer a historical perspective to explain where theories come from so the administrator is better equipped to deal with problem situations. I believe that a liberal education emphasis holds the greatest promise of realizing the leadership aspirations all of us hold for educational leaders in education.

Educational administration is a different kind of profession -- one more related to the ethical sciences than the scientific professions. As an ethical science administration relies on judgment, intuition, and accumulated cognitive maps in making decisions and on keen skills of analysis in evaluating decision-making situations. Hopefully these talents are moderated and directed by ethical concerns for what is good and just and for what makes sense educationally.[1]

A strong preparation and certification program for school administrators is one that can build and sharpen judgment and intuition, that can contribute to building analytical skills and that helps provide an ethical perspective to the future administrator. The domain of knowledge that contribute to such aspirations

are vast and varied. Dwight Waldo, for example, has noted that "indeed no discipline is without relevance to administration -- and administrative study is relevant to every discipline."[2]

The researcher overwhelmingly suggests that it is the personal qualities of the administrator which have most to do with success. Some of these qualities are beyond the reach of preparation and certification programs but others are not. Sergiovanni emphasizes that one's sense of mission, capacity to think, ability to conceptualize, sense of judgment, commitment to job, ability to work effectively with others, sense of purpose, knowledge of context, and sense of the importance can all be developed, honed and toned by formal education.[1] Most of these characteristics can be summed under the heading of educational leadership. Leadership has been used somewhat inappropriately over the years and its meaning has been weakened by over use and random application. I agree with Sergiovanni in my use of the word leadership and it is more in concert with that of Starratt.

> A critical quality of any leader is that he is profoundly convinced that his vision of what ought to be or could be has a dramatic significance for the lives of those for and with whom he works. He is caught up with drama and excitement of what he and his subordinates are doing, and he communicates and shares them with subordinates.
>
> When speaking of educational leaders, we must add to the above quality, a continuous, lived experienced of learning, in which the educational leader shares with his subordinates hiw own zest for expanding his own understanding and appreciation of the human epic.[3]

Across the United States, school administrative preparation and certification programs seem more concerned with <u>training</u> than <u>educating</u>. Inherent in each view are sets of assumptions, rationales and images of administration that have forceful effects on the design of university preparation programs and on the quality of leadership we seek in schools.

To philosophers "training" refers to task instrumental oriented activities that are extrinsic to the administration.[4] "Educating" on the other hand is purpose-meaning oriented in the sense that administrative activities have intrinsic value as well: I have a "responsibility" to fulfill rather than, I have a "job" to do.[1]

Stephen Robbins speaks to this same point as follows:

> "Can administrators be trained? Let us consider what training is, and then compare it with education.
>
> Training is the process of learning a sequence of programmed behaviors. We train bricklayers, television reparimen, typists, and hospital admission clerks. The activities of these jobs can be precisely defined, broken down, analyzed, and a "one best way" determined. Training is the application of knowledge. It gives people an awareness of the rules and procedures to guide their behavior.
>
> In contrast, education instills sound reasoning processes rather than merely imparting a body of serial facts. Education is the understanding and interpretation of knowledge. It does not provide definitive answers, but rather develops a logical and rational mind that can determine relationships among pertinent variables and thereby understand phenomena."[3]

Following Robbins, training and education are conceptually different. In the training mode it is assumed that particularistic tasks and skills can be mastered as one does his job. In the educating mode it is assumed that particularistic insights and capabilities are learned as one fulfills his responsibilities. Adopting an educating mode in administrative preparation and certification programs offers a decided qualitative edge over existing training modes. Indisputably, programs seeking primarily to build intellectual integrity, analytical ability, and sense of purpose and that seek exclusively to facilitate understanding of task, organization and environment are of more significance than those that seek to build one's competence in schedule building, in using the school directory, in computing the equalization formula, in practicing accounting, in estimating future enrollments, in quoting from the school code, in knowing how the State Department of Education is organized, in describing the prescribed roles of school system or regional superintendents, in attaching names of legislators to proposed bills, in issuing tax warrants, in assigning teachers, in accumulating a few collective-bargaining tacts, in knowing how to organize one's office, and so on. These are matters that often differ as one moves from state to state and are easily picked up once on the job.

Significant Administrative Processes

Administration can be defined broadly as the process of working with and through others to efficiently accomplish organizational goals. Administration can also be defined as a process of functions. Planning, organizing, leading and controlling are the four functions most often mentioned by theorists.[6]

Planning involves the setting of goals and objectives for the school and school system and the developing of blueprints and strategies for their implementation. Organizing involves the bringing together of human, financial, and physical resources in the most effective way to accomplish goals. The leading function is concerned with guiding and supervising subordinates. Plans of organizations are implemented by people and people need to be motivated, expectations need to be defined, and communication channels need to be maintained. The fourth administrative process, controlling, refers to the administrators' evaluation functions and includes reviewing, regulating and controlling performance, providing feedback and otherwise tending to standards of goal attainment. The research on administrative processes tends to favor goal attainment and internal integration responsibilities of administration with some attention given to external adoption. Pattern-maintenance responsibilities are typcially neglected by those who write about administrative processes.

Significant Administration Skills

Still another way that administration can be defined is by identifying competencies and skill areas necessary for carrying out the processes of administration. Robert L. Katz has identified three basic skills that he feels successful administration rests--technical, human and conceptual.[7] Technical skill assumes an understanding of and proficiency in the methods, processes, procedures, and techniques in education. In noninstructional areas it includes knowledge in finance, accounting, scheduling, purchasing, planning construction, and maintenance. Usually, technical skills are more important to administrative and supervisory roles lower

in the school hierarchy. The chairperson of a department or grade level supervisor, for example, needs far greater command of technical skills relating to instruction than does the principal. The business manager needs a more technical command of accounting procedures and computer technology than does the superintendent. Technical skills can be classified into two types, task-technical and analytical-technical. Task-technical skills refer to particularistic know-how and analytical-technical skills refers to particularistic abilities of analytical appraisal. Knowing how to appropriately add, subtract or delete items to an accounting budget is an example of task-technical skills and being able to infer and evaluate actual priorities based on financial resource distribution in the budget is an example of analytical-technical skills. As is readily apparent, analytical-technical skills are more intellectual than the task-technical skills. Analytical-technical skills must be developed and nurtured.

Human skill refers to the school administrator's ability to work effectively and efficiently with other people on a one-to-one basis and in group environments. This skill requires considerable self-understanding and acceptance as well as appreciation, empathy, and consideration for other people. Its knowledge base includes an understanding of adult motivation, attitudinal development, group dynamics, human need, morale, and the development of human resources. Human skills seem equally important to administrative and supervisory positions through the school hierarchy. Regardless of position, all administrators work through others to achieve desired goals.[8]

Conceptual skill includes the school administrator's ability to see the school, the school system, and the total educational program as a whole. This skill includes the effective charting of interdependence for each of the components of the school as an organization, the educational program as an instructional system, and the functioning of the human organization. The development of conceptual skill relies heavily on a balanced emphasis of administrative theory, organizational and human behavior, ethics, educational philosophy and intellectual integrity.

Programmatic Issues and Concerns

Establishing a curriculum of study for the preparation of school administrators must include choices as to what will be included. High among priorities would be to build a program with a strong emphasis in the foundations of life and education, in the broader social and political context of educational governance and administration, and in organizational and administrative theory and behavior. A strong preparation and certification program is one that resembles the classical liberal educational model rather than a vocational school education model. As stated in the opening paragraph of this article, the more abstract, theoretical and foundational the program the more lasting the effect.

Educational administration is an intellectual demanding and at times draining activitiy requiring high levels of analytical skills, a collection of cognitive charts in key areas such as education, governance, politics, intellectual integrity, ethics, economics, and organization, and a sense of values and purpose. Given this emphasis, it follows that a liberal education is a better preparation model than vocational training.

Given the liberal educational model orientation, programmatic recommendations will be general and not have specific courses, hours, or experiences. Nevertheless, it is possible to suggest a number of programmatic stipulations and principles.

1. The intellectual nature of preparation programs require that they be university rather than field based. The intellectual integrity of the program must be preserved by the university.
2. Clinical or internship experiences should be viewed as simply one mechanism for providing students who need them with a background for university study rather than as a training ground to accumulate technical-task competencies.

The internship should be the culminating field-based experience of the preparation period prior to certification. The internship should facilitate careful observation of the developing administrator's behavior, as well as

heop him develop skill in diagnosing problems and in considering strategies to resolve them. Through participation in seminars, clinics and work conferences, the developing administrator should have the opportunity to see the images created and the consequences that result from administrative interventions in a broad range of educational problematic situations! Internship options shou d include, in addition to experience in an educational setting, assignments in government and in one or more social agencies. Thus, the internship requires a rather extensive time allocation for both the intern and the field and University supervisors.

It is through the internship that the prospective school administrator learns best how to put theory into practice. A student combines and extends past experiences into areas that he must be competent as he moves into a future administrative position. The prospective school administrator should also profit from the direct, immediate, on-the-job supervision by experienced administrators now employing these administrative skills. As part of the total graduate program commencing with the University course-work, the internship provies a significant laboratory setting so that classroom course work can be explored, integrated and demonstrated. Again, the key component is putting theory into practice.

3. State regulated courses and requirements should be kept to a minimum and when established, should be specified in only a general way. No magic path or one best way exists to reach the ideas of educational leadership. Even at the technical level, technical-analytical skills can be taught in a variety of ways.
4. State regulation should speak to qualitative and substantive standards and avoid such programmatic details as prescribed courses, experiences and clock hours. Programs should not be judged on programmatic technicalities but on ideals of intellectual integrity and ethics.

5. The liberal education tradition, as opposed to the vocational or trade-school tradition, requires that universities be afforded wide discretion in developing and articulating programs. It should be expected that a variety of programs would be developed by universities. Each should be judged on intellectual integrity, ethics and the ideals of educational leadership.

Common and Specialized Learnings

Both common and specialized learnings are necessary in preparation of school administrators and supervisors regardless of job definition. Most authorities agree, however, that in any array of programs common learnings should dominate. Miller, for example, in summarizing the proceedings of the University Council for Educational Administrator's task Force on common and specialized learnings suggests two-thirds of the learnings be common by all students and that specialized content for specific positions or functions amount to one-third. The common elements he proposes are "a sense of educational purpose and program, and understanding of the structure and control of education and society, in an understanding of leadership and the social process."[9]

Emergent professions attempt to develop a definition, role and function markedly different from that of other occupations, particularly those with lower organizational status, working in the same area. To do otherwise endangers their claim to special importance. Administrative preparation programs heavily oriented towarding teaching the theory of administration along with a historical perspective to explain where theories come from will serve to better equip and develop analytical and evaluating skills for the school administrator in problematic decision-making situations. Preparation programs requiring a strong liberal education tradition are important safe-guards against professional fracturing. If one were to argue that a particular specialist's professional work was so important that he could not study the profession of educational administration

broadly, then I would urge that some other educational agency prepare him instead of the University and that he be tracked in a career line away from the school superintendency, principalship and other key educational leadership positions.

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